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## Troubadours, Taxidermy, and Transcendence: Reading Flaubert's "Un cœur simple" with Sand's "Les ailes de courage"

*by Kate M. Bonin*

IN MAY 1876, days before the death of his dear friend George Sand, Gustave Flaubert wrote her a letter announcing his latest project, conceived with her in mind: "Vous verrez par mon *Histoire d'un cœur simple* où vous reconnaîtrez votre influence immédiate que je ne suis pas si entêté que vous le croyez. Je crois que la tendance morale, ou plutôt le dessous humain de cette petite œuvre vous sera agréable!" (*Flaubert-Sand Correspondance* 533). The extended dialogue between the two *troubadours* is well-studied; numerous critics have sought to characterize the nature of Sand's influence on Flaubert's most famous *conte*, viewing "Un cœur simple" as a meeting-ground of Sandian and Flaubertian aesthetics or modes of thought.<sup>1</sup> However, "Un cœur simple" owes a debt to Sand that is a great deal more immediate than has generally been realized. Flaubert's 1877 tale is in very close dialogue with a recent tale of Sand's own: "Les ailes de courage," first published in the 15 Dec. 1872 *Revue des Deux Mondes*, then reprinted in the 1875 volume *Contes d'une grand-mère*, one of Sand's last publications before her death. To date, I have found only one previous article that briefly compares Sand's hero, Clopinet, to Flaubert's Félicité, although it concludes quickly that the characters' differences make of Félicité an "anti-Clopinet" or "quite a *réplique* to Clopinet's Napoleonic transcendence!" (Frank 63).

The close relationship between these texts merits a more detailed study. These tales of *cœur* and *courage* share a common interest in the "éducation littéraire" and in the

moral development of their illiterate main characters. Both Sand and Flaubert ask how a naïve or unschooled protagonist, attempting to make sense of his or her experience, responds to the weight of received culture. In this shared focus, both *contes* draw on the eighteenth-century motif of “l’enfant de la nature,” with clear references to Rousseau’s 1762 *Émile* and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s 1788 *Paul et Virginie*. Scholars have amply discussed the overt allusions of “Un cœur simple” to *Paul et Virginie* (Showalter; Felman; Chambers). Yet within this chain of literary references (Rousseau-Bernardin-Flaubert), “Les ailes de courage” remains an important missing link. Moreover, these intertextual references play a key role in the preoccupation of “Un cœur simple” with the already-said, including received ideas, cliché, and psittacism, fittingly emblemized by Loulou the parrot.<sup>2</sup> As Shoshana Felman argues: “L’histoire de Félicité est le signe d’autres histoires pareilles: le commencement du récit ne fait d’emblée que les répéter. L’histoire de Félicité est ainsi en elle-même une *histoire cliché*, et qui se donne comme telle, qui se définit, dès l’abord, par le statut de la *citation*” (167). Given the engagement of “Un cœur simple” with varied forms of repetition, it is all the more important that modern readers become aware of just how closely Flaubert’s work reprises Sand’s less well-known tale, an “histoire pareille” that is well worth reading on its own merits.

#### L’enfant de la nature *in Normandy: Complicated Legacies of the Rousseauistic Education*

The echoes between “Les ailes de courage” and “Un cœur simple” are numerous. Like Félicité, Clopinet is a peasant born during the eighteenth century in Normandy. His village, Saint-Pierre Azif, is located only eight miles from Pont-l’Évêque, the home of Madame Aubain.<sup>3</sup> A sympathetic character—notable for possessing “la simplicité du

cœur” (234)—Clopinet is disadvantaged by being born with a limp. Like Félicité, Clopinet is put to work keeping cows in his earliest childhood, and is later obliged to leave home for work among strangers. Apprenticed to a mean-spirited tailor, Clopinet runs away to a life of solitary freedom on the nearby coast. Here, Clopinet makes an idyllic home for himself among the cliffs, living on shellfish and spending most of his time watching the many species of birds found along the shore. He is aided by his magical wings of courage, which unfold and carry him to safety in moments of crisis—unless the wings are merely hallucinated by Clopinet; the narrative voice neither confirms nor denies their objective reality. Though completely unschooled—as illiterate as Félicité, in fact—Clopinet is an astute observer of his natural surroundings; indeed, “Les ailes de courage” was subtitled “conte d’un naturaliste” when initially published as a *feuilleton*. Clopinet’s empirical knowledge of birds leads him to a job opportunity with the local baron de Platecôte, an amateur ornithologist who needs a taxidermist to preserve the specimens of his collection. The baron is initially skeptical of Clopinet’s abilities (“c’est un petit paysan qui ne sait rien”), but finally decides: “Eh bien! je le prends!” (232). This scene anticipates the turning-point of Félicité’s life, the moment when Madame Aubain hesitates to hire her (“la jeune fille ne savait pas grand-chose”), then concludes: “Soit, je vous accepte!” (47). Immediately following these hiring decisions, both narratives abruptly whisk their protagonists into new, loftier surroundings, again in strikingly similar terms: “Dès le jour même, Clopinet fut installé au manoir de Platecôte” (233); “Félicité, un quart d’heure après, était installée chez elle” (47).

As is the case with Félicité, Clopinet’s new “indoors” job in an upper-class household brings him a number of fringe benefits, including a bedroom at the top of the

house with a window overlooking the Normandy prairies. Again like Félicité, Clopinet never attends school, although he picks up a bit of ad hoc learning for his job: the baron's valet is tasked with teaching Clopinet to read, while the village curé teaches Clopinet enough Latin to understand the formal taxonomy of his taxidermied friends. Like Félicité's nephew Victor, Clopinet also puts out to sea from Honfleur, exploring the nearby British Isles and more distant ports of call, making first-hand scientific discoveries and sending home new exotic specimens for the baron's collection. Like Madame Aubain, the baron de Platecôte rather exploits his hardworking employee, publishing scholarly articles on Clopinet's findings without crediting him. Yet upon his death, the baron, again like Madame Aubain, grants Clopinet a legacy in recognition of his long service. Clopinet and his extended family take up residence in the Platecôte manor; indeed, Clopinet becomes a de facto nobleman, henceforth referred to as "monsieur le baron" by the locals. In his final days, Clopinet devotes his leisure time to science and to art: he writes anonymous notes on his observations to other naturalists, and creates "dessins excellents" that are much admired after his death (254).

From savant to landowner to (anonymous) author and gifted artist: with these varied roles, Clopinet holds a central place in multiple communities. Clopinet's social successes stand in stark contrast to Félicité, whose final years mark her sharp decline as a social being, as Per Nykrog observes (60). However, physical hardship during his travels takes its toll on Clopinet; his childhood limp comes back in his later years, a detail echoed by Félicité's gradual enfeeblement: "[D]epuis son étourdissement, elle traînait une jambe" (75). Finally, like "Un cœur simple," "Les ailes de courage" ends with the protagonist's death, accompanied by a possibly mystical event involving a gigantic bird.

Clopinet dies alone on the shore, unobserved except for an old woman who swears that “elle avait vu passer un grand oiseau de mer dont elle n’avait jamais vu le pareil auparavant, [qui] lui avait crié avec la voix de *M. le baron*: ‘Adieu, bonnes gens! ne soyez point en peine de moi, j’ai retrouvé mes ailes’” (255). With this dazzling apotheosis, Clopinet comes to embody the Sandian aphorism that “L’homme-oiseau c’est l’artiste,” as Brigitte Lane observes (79).<sup>4</sup> As with “Un cœur simple,” however, readers are left to decide for themselves whether to credit the subjective testimony of the elderly, female witness to the tale’s final events, marvelous or mundane.

If Sand had lived long enough to read the completed “Un cœur simple,” she doubtless would have recognized the “influence immédiate” of her own tale of taxidermy and transcendence. However, rather than dismiss Flaubert’s extensive references to “Les ailes de courage” as a mere inside joke or a prolonged tip of the hat toward his old friend, one must ask whether “Un cœur simple” attempts seriously to engage with Sandian ethics: the “tendance morale” or “dessous humain” that Flaubert alluded to in his final letter to Sand. It is here that the eighteenth-century literary and philosophical concept of “l’enfant de la nature” comes into play, because it so strongly colored the moral philosophy and teaching methods that Sand articulated in the 1870s, at the very end of her long writing career.<sup>5</sup>

In *Émile*, Rousseau argues the advantages of allowing a child to grow up in a state of “natural” isolation, outside the mores and the received ideas of any conventional “civilized” community: “Le plus sûr moyen de s’élever au dessus des préjugés et d’ordonner ses jugemens sur les vrais rapports des choses est de se mettre à la place d’un homme isolé, et de juger lui-même eu égard à sa propre utilité” (4: 455; original spelling

respected). The advantages of this unorthodox living arrangement are both moral and intellectual. Kept apart from the tools of a more worldly education—including maps, compasses, and especially books—children will learn through direct contact with their environment, Rousseau speculates. Paradoxically, his hypothetical pupil Émile can achieve this state of virtuous isolation only virtually, by means of a book. After reading *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) Émile imagines himself in the hero's place, an intense form of make-believe that has immediate practical value, according to Rousseau: “Je veux que la tête lui en tourne, qu’il s’occupe sans cesse de son château, de ses chèvres, de ses plantations, qu’il apprenne en détail non dans des livres mais sur les choses tout ce qu’il faut savoir en pareil cas” (4: 455; original spelling respected; emphasis added). In this way, Émile's imaginary *robinsonade* both depends on, and undermines, the value of the written word. It promotes an image of selfhood immaculately preserved from contact with culture, yet this image has an important lineage in French literary history, inspiring Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's dyad of happily ignorant Créole children *Paul et Virginie* (1788), as well as Flaubert and Sand herself. These paradoxes of Émile's education greatly inform Sand's thinking in the early 1870s, and not only in “Les ailes de courage.” The same issues also animate a three-part series of articles, “Les idées d’un maître d’école,” which Sand published in *Le Temps* (1872). The schoolmaster in question is Sand herself; the ambitious goal of this pedagogic project was, as Sand commented to Flaubert, to “rendre clairs les débuts de l’enfant dans la vie cultivée” (*F-S Corr.* 368). In the section that follows, I focus on the main theories that Sand articulates in this *feuilleton* treatise, in order to show how they directly pertain to both Clopinet and

Félicité's intellectual development, their moral growth, and their conflicted relationship to written knowledge.

"Les paysans, chose étrange, ne voient pas"

In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War and the disastrous Paris Commune, Flaubert declared to Sand that he believed teaching peasants and workers how to read was perfectly useless (*F-S Corr.* 346).<sup>6</sup> As a pointed riposte, Sand answered Flaubert in "Les idées d'un maître d'école." Like *Émile*, these articles offer a mix of philosophy and practical advice: for instance, by outlining step-by-step directions for teaching literacy using the patented "Lafforien" method, her favorite. She also shares examples from her own experience in teaching her children and grandchildren how to read, as well as the household servants at Nohant and any Berrichon peasants who asked for lessons. With this generous open-door policy, Sand affirms her active commitment to equal access to education. Yet she also voices her conviction that peasants, as a class, were intellectually disadvantaged; for them, she argues, learning to read is uniquely difficult. Among her pupils, Sand draws a distinction between "ceux qui regardent et ceux qui ne regardent pas," grouping all peasant children in the latter category:

Les paysans, chose étrange, ne voient pas. [...] On croirait que leurs sens, en contact perpétuel avec les choses de la nature, sont très développés. C'est le contraire qui a lieu [...]. Ils n'observent rien ou observent à faux. Ils ont une vision souvent poétique de l'ensemble, mais tout détail qui n'est pas pour eux l'objet d'un intérêt personnel leur échappe. À force d'ignorer les causes, ils les dédaignent et deviennent incapables de les percevoir, même quand elles leur



parlent par des faits très saisissables. C'est ainsi qu'on a pu les conserver superstitieux et leur apprendre à se payer d'explications fantastiques. La lettre des religions les a maintenus enfants, leur organisation physique s'en est ressentie. Il leur est donc très difficile d'apprendre à lire. Songeons à eux aussi bien qu'à nos enfants. Tâchons de leur alléger la difficulté. ("Idées")

For Sand, the particular difficulty of peasants is that they live intimately with nature, but in ignorance of what they see: a kind of pre-existing condition that must be addressed before they can even begin their reading lessons. Unlike Clopinet, who independently develops the ability to compare, contrast and above all classify the bird species that he observes, the peasant children of Sand's essay need the active intervention of enlightened adults (the implied *nous* of the last two sentences). The role of these adults appears two-fold. Sand invites her readers both to teach children the rudiments of the scientific method, and to protect them from unscientific, alternative explanations of natural phenomena: the superstitious or fantastic explanations offered by "les religions." Sand's use of the plural here just barely conceals her ongoing critique of what she considered the Catholic Church's outsized role in contemporary French education.

In similar fashion, Sand argues that all children must learn about the natural world before they become acquainted with human history, which she characterizes here as "le spectacle du mal et l'épouvante des désastres," the memory of 1871 clearly still fresh ("Idées"). Sand cites as examples the famous murderers Pierre François Lacenaire and Jean-Baptiste Troppmann, who (she argues) must as children have read or been told the details of some "crime atroce" that corrupted their sanity and led directly to their own later crimes. From this, the article concludes that children must be protected from

premature exposure to the wrong kinds of knowledge: “L’oisillon n’est-il pas élevé dans le plus fin duvet, jusqu’à ce que ses ailes soient poussées? Les ailes de l’âme se montreront bien quand l’heure sera venue” (“Idées”), an image of graded moral development that clearly anticipates “Les ailes du courage,” written only months later.

To be sure, these speculations on the genesis of the “criminal mind” may feel dated or overly simplistic. What’s interesting here is that Sand, like Rousseau, figures reading as dangerous, with children especially vulnerable to the impressions they form from the written word.<sup>7</sup> But then, children who are left illiterate are also vulnerable to superstition and exploitation: “Aux yeux de la conteuse, il n’est pas de héros possible qui ne sache lire ni écrire” (Lane 74). This dilemma underlies the tension at the heart of “Les ailes de courage,” a work which, like *Émile*, both values and paradoxically undermines forms of knowledge that are acquired from the printed page.<sup>8</sup>

Clopinet’s life story offers an exemplary model of the benefits that Sand firmly believed could be gained through direct observation of the natural world: becoming someone who (unlike the peasant children of Sand’s experience) *does* look critically at the details of his environment. As a child runaway, Clopinet separates himself from his social milieu and lives for months in perfect solitude along a stretch of Normandy coast. He arranges food, water, fire, and shelter with Robinsonian ingenuity, in a clear nod to *Émile*: “Il se retrouva seul, dans son désert, avec un plaisir comme s’il eût revu sa maison et son jardin” (198).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, part of the charm of “Les ailes de courage” is the pleasure with which the narrative enters into the details of its hero’s day-to-day housekeeping. After only a few months of living on the coast, Clopinet’s congenital limp disappears, while “[s]a figure aussi avait pris un autre air, un regard vif, pénétrant, une expression

assurée et sérieuse” (221). In short, his independent lifestyle endows Clopinet with extraordinary new physical and mental powers. Further, although he does not (at first) know the names of the birds he studies, his knowledge surpasses that of older or better-educated characters; as Marie-Cécile Levet observes, the narrative privileges direct discovery over other forms of learning (131). Indeed, most of Clopinet’s contacts with other people—of whatever class—are figured as a series of confrontations between his superior knowledge and their errors. Where his sailor uncle believes that “[o]n apprend tout en voyageant” (222), Clopinet himself spots the exaggerations or falsehoods among his uncle’s tall tales of exotic foreign birds: phoenixes, condors that carry off whole cows, species of birds that eat nothing but air etc. Similarly, even when he is a novice taxidermist, Clopinet’s work is superior to that of his teacher, because he knows how to arrange stuffed birds in more lifelike poses (without gilded nuts in their beaks, one presumes); and from the first day, Clopinet is able to correct the baron on how best to organize the species of his collection.

Under the baron’s protection, Clopinet learns to read and write French and Latin in record time. Yet the narrative goes to some curious lengths to moderate the value of Clopinet’s “éducation littéraire,” or even to attenuate his contact with the printed page. Thus, even though Clopinet greatly admires the naturalist Buffon—“dont il lisait avec ardeur le magnifique ouvrage” (235)—he swiftly realizes that certain “secrets of nature” cannot be found in any book (236), and Clopinet’s own contributions to contemporary scholarship are always anonymous. At first, this is because the baron selfishly withholds credit from his protégé; but later, when Clopinet communicates his original findings

directly with other naturalists, it is always by anonymous note: both demonstrating his mastery of the world of letters, and resolutely concealing it.

Félicité, for her part, appears to illustrate the limitations, rather than the advantages, of the self-taught. When shown an atlas, Félicité looks for an image of “Victor’s house” on a map of the West Indies, demonstrating her perfect ignorance of the tools of the worldly sort of education (making her the target of Bourais’s amusement, which is rather a different result than Émile’s or indeed Clopinet’s splendid intellectual independence). Unlike Clopinet, who brings a healthy skepticism to his uncle’s exotic tall tales, Félicité wholly believes the cliché images she has “learned” from the Aubain children’s *géographie en estampes*; she imagines her nephew kidnapped by apes or devoured by cannibals. Clopinet’s well-ordered systems for classifying bird species contrast starkly with the heterogeneous jumbles of stuff piled up in Félicité’s bedroom. There could hardly be more divergent learning outcomes.

Yet here again, the two *contes* are more interesting for their points in common, even in the midst of their obvious differences. Both feature similar moments when their unschooled, isolated protagonists encounter and try to come to grips with unknown phenomena in their environment. Interestingly, both authors use *style indirect libre* to incorporate the characters’ sense of curiosity and puzzlement within the narrative voice. For instance, the young Clopinet arrives on the beach at night and sees the sea for the first time in his life:

C’était pour lui un lieu incompréhensible. D’où il était, en sortant la tête des buissons, il voyait un grand demi-cercle de dunes dont il ne pouvait distinguer les plis et les ressauts, et qui lui paraissait être une immense muraille ébréchée

s'écroulant dans le vide. Ce vide, c'était la mer; mais, comme il ne s'en faisait aucune idée et que la brume du soir lui cachait l'horizon, il ne la distinguait pas du ciel et s'étonnait seulement de voir des étoiles dans le haut et de singulières clartés dans le bas. Était-ce des éclairs de chaleur? Mais comment se trouvaient-ils sous ses pieds? Comment comprendre tout cela quand on n'a rien vu, pas même une grande rivière ou une petite montagne? (185–86)

By representing the half-circle of sand dunes as a stretch of crumbling wall, Sand neatly evokes not only Clopinet's present incomprehension, but also his future progress; as his prior limitations begin to crumble and fall away, his horizons broaden both figuratively and literally. This passage bears comparison to a key moment in "Un cœur simple" in which Félicité tries to make sense of the incorporeal strangeness of the Holy Spirit:

Elle avait peine à imaginer sa personne; car il n'était pas seulement oiseau, mais encore un feu, et d'autres fois un souffle. C'est peut-être sa lumière qui voltige la nuit aux bords des marécages, son haleine qui pousse les nuées, sa voix qui rend les cloches harmonieuses; et elle demeurait dans une adoration, jouissant de la fraîcheur des murs et de la tranquillité de l'église. (55)

The settings are dissimilar of course. Alone on the shore, Clopinet confronts sensory information that falls outside his prior experience, in a dramatic moment of inaugural contact with the sea. In contrast, Félicité appears to be in church, absorbing vicarious lessons in elementary Catholic doctrine. However, the precise moment at which she entertains these thoughts is as hard to pin down as the will-o-the-wisp that she has clearly also encountered, and wondered about, in some even earlier, unspecified moment (does this passage relate Félicité's first church visit, or some subsequent point during Virginie's

routine lessons? Or does it voice unanswered questions that Félicité returns to again and again? This impossibility of identifying the where and the when of Félicité's moment of wonder beautifully repeats the unfixedness of the Holy Spirit itself). By attributing natural effects to supernatural causes, Félicité appears as mystified as the peasants whom Sand references in "Les idées d'un maître d'école." Yet this is only half of what Flaubert's heroine is trying to do. In effect, Félicité is trying to solve one mystery with another: that is, seeking to understand a particularly difficult metaphysical concept by relating it to familiar but likewise unexplained phenomena (Félicité lacks the cognitive tools to explain, e.g., spontaneously combusting hydrocarbons in a swamp, weather patterns, or the physics of harmoniously ringing church bells). In this moment, Félicité stands on the verge of an authentic mysticism or a lifelong mystification. In contrast, Clopinet is poised to begin a groundbreaking (if discreet) career in the natural sciences. These outcomes diverge widely, yet they represent different answers to the same question. Both tales ask what can be learned through unmediated contact with the natural world. It is the moment of stunned, uncomprehending *seeing* that clearly engages the interest of both authors.

As I have argued above, within "Les ailes de courage," learning how to *see* precedes, and always supersedes, undertaking to read or write. Béatrice Didier observes that "c'est bien une pédagogie du regard qu'entreprend la conteuse" (222). Indeed, the tale's grandmotherly narrative voice makes this moral explicit: "La nature est une mine de merveilles, mes enfants, et toutes les fois qu'on y met tant soit peu le nez, on est étonné de ce qu'elle vous révèle" (176). Flaubert, for his part, was not especially motivated to study the wonders of the natural world. For example, he bragged in a letter

to Turgenev in 1874 that he found walking in the Swiss Alps immensely boring: “[J]e ne suis pas l’homme de la Nature: ‘ses merveilles’ m’émouvent moins que celles de l’Art” (*Corr.* 158). Yet Sand’s exhortation speaks to a crucial point in common between the two authors which I would like to emphasize here, in conclusion. In March 1876, during the writing of “Un cœur simple,” Flaubert tried to articulate to Sand his ideal of writing well. Interestingly, he cites Clopinet’s hero Buffon, although Flaubert was clearly more interested in Buffon as an author than as a naturalist:

*[B]ien écrire* est tout, parce que ‘bien écrire c’est à la fois bien sentir, bien penser, et bien dire’ (Buffon). Le dernier terme est donc dépendant des deux autres puisqu’il faut sentir fortement, afin de penser, et penser pour exprimer. [...] Ce souci de la Beauté extérieure que vous me reprochez est pour moi *une méthode*. Quand je découvre une mauvaise assonance ou une répétition dans une de mes phrases, je suis sûr que je patauge dans le Faux; à force de chercher, je trouve l’expression juste qui était la seule, et qui est, en même temps, l’harmonieuse. Le mot ne manque jamais quand on possède l’idée. (*F-S Corr.* 527)

In response to this passage, Victor Brombert observes that for Flaubert, “Le style devient ainsi bien autre chose qu’une prouesse technique; c’est une affaire de vision” (29).

Flaubert’s laborious quest for truth in art—what Brombert terms une “affaire de vision”—seems to me strikingly similar to Sand’s insistence on learning to see, or to understand what one sees, in the natural world. In their respective searches for two (admittedly different) sorts of beauty, both Sand and Flaubert insist on the need for arduous work, the hard critical thinking that necessarily precedes discovery. As the dialogue between Sand and Flaubert’s tales reveals, where the two authors differ most

fundamentally is how, within this process of discovery, each conceives the role of writing itself.<sup>10</sup>

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Rice argues that Félicité recalls Sand's representations of Berrichon peasants in her *romans champêtres* (235). Nykrog proposes that all of the *Trois contes* be read in dialogue with Sand's progressive conception of history. Schor maintains that Félicité's rare kindness suggests that Flaubert was attempting to rethink the relationship between seemingly opposed modes of idealism and realism (771–73).

<sup>2</sup>On repetition and psittacism in “Un cœur simple,” see: Gaillard; Chambers; Felman; Bertrand.

<sup>3</sup>More overlapping geography: Clopinet makes his hermitage in the Falaise des Vaches-Noires, a stretch of cliff located eight miles from Trouville, where Clopinet has a seafaring uncle, and where Félicité's sister, Victor's mother, also lives. Trouville is, of course, the same seaside town where Madame Aubain, Félicité, and the children go on a bathing trip after their encounter with the bull.

<sup>4</sup>The first chapter of Sand's *Histoire de ma vie* details the “affinités particulières” that Sand felt for birds, which she attributed to being the granddaughter of a Parisian bird-seller (16–22). See Walling for a list of Sand's works in which birds play a significant role.



<sup>5</sup>Interestingly, this brought Sand's *œuvre* full circle, since her first solo novel (*Indiana*, 1832) also engaged Rousseau and Bernardin's model of the "enfant de la nature" (Bonin).

<sup>6</sup>Both Flaubert and Sand were devastated by the national disasters of 1870–71. Flaubert read the war and the Commune as a confirmation of the essential stupidity and aggression of *le peuple*, lashing out repeatedly at Sand for her long-held republican ideals and her faith in human progress (Tricotel 163; Roubichou; Sachs). I read "Les ailes de courage" as part of Sand's response to Flaubert's acute misanthropy during the early 1870s.

<sup>7</sup>Sand and Flaubert are both well-known for their early novels in which young women protagonists come to grief through too-strong identification with their preferred reading material (Booker).

<sup>8</sup>I am indebted to Marie-Christine Vinson and Brigitte Lane, who draw attention to distinctions between written and other forms of knowledge in "Les ailes de courage," although both emphasize the complementarity of the "culture orale" and "culture écrite" within Sand's *conte* (Vinson 74; Lane 68). I am less concerned with oral culture, and see more tension than harmony in the *conte*'s contradictory representations of the written word.

<sup>9</sup>Here, readers may also be reminded of Hugo's *Les travailleurs de la mer* (1866), which details the solo salvage of a wrecked steamboat by the intrepid Gilliatt (a socially ostracized mariner who, like the later Clopinet, also feels an affinity for the seabirds of the English Channel).

<sup>10</sup>I am grateful to David Powell for first bringing “Les ailes de courage” to my attention at the 2012 Nineteenth-Century French Studies conference in Raleigh, NC. Grateful thanks are also due to Frances Novak and Stephanie Schechner for their invaluable feedback on earlier drafts of the current essay.

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